

Governors Call on Bush to Act Against Global Warming

The Associated Press

June 25, 1990, Monday, AM cycle

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Section: Washington Dateline

Length: 649 words

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Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

A task force of the nation's governors urged President Bush on Monday to act on a consensus report calling for speedy domestic and international action to fight global warming.

The bipartisan group of politicians, led by Gov. James Thompson, R-Ill., said Bush appeared more receptive than in the past to the idea of taking action.

The report, issued on behalf of the National Governors' Association, said action is needed to stabilize emissions of gases said to contribute to global warming, to develop an international agreement to protect the atmosphere and to use extensive reforestation programs to reduce the effects of climate change.

The White House position has been that global warming is an unproven theory and that further study should precede action.

Thompson and the other governors said that although considerable scientific uncertainty remains about the so-called greenhouse effect and other components of climatic change, enough evidence is in hand to justify action now.

Democratic Gov. Buddy Roemer of Louisiana said Bush must elude "two traps" if he is to deal with the problem successfully.

In the first place, if Bush were to wait for 100 percent scientific certainty, "you are paralyzed" and nothing will be done "because not all of the facts are on one side of the question," Roemer said.

"But I think the president will come to the conclusion that the evidence is clear enough to justify action now," Roemer said.

The other "trap," he said, is the fact that the issue transcends the next election and extends well into the next century.

"It is important to act now," Roemer said. "I think he will."

Task force recommendations include:

- Cost-effective energy conservation and efficiency measures to stabilize U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide.

- Halting the production of chlorofluorocarbons and using "cost-effective strategies" to stabilize or reduce other greenhouse gases.

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- Beginning extensive forestry programs to reduce the effect of climatic change.
- Developing and commercializing alternative-energy systems, including clean fossil fuel, renewable energy sources and safe nuclear power.
- Planning and acting now to adapt to a changing climate.

Thompson said the report is important because "it is probably the first and only consensus document that exists anywhere on the issue of global climate change and the greenhouse effect."

"It's an incredible consensus," he said," noting that the governors who produced the report come from urban and rural areas, from regions that produce coal and natural gas and from farm states.

"We tried to see beyond the excessive rhetoric that sometimes surrounds this issue," Thompson said. "Those of us who must make policy in the face of scientific uncertainty must be careful to avoid over-reaction. But given the potential significance of global climate change, some immediate steps are justified."

Because of that uncertainty, Thompson said, "the policies we recommend have multiple benefits, including cleaner air and energy security.

"Regardless of how much or how little our climate changes, the result of these actions will be a cleaner environment," he said.

"I think the president's reaction to the whole report and the consensus that has been reached was a very strong one," Thompson said. "I think we did get from the president a pledge for international leadership."

The possibility of global warming and destructive climatic change is based on the fact that earth's atmosphere acts like a greenhouse around the globe. Certain gases generated on the surface rise into the atmosphere, trap the sun's heat and warm the planet.

Although the greenhouse effect warms the planet to the extent needed to make it habitable, the governors noted the concern in recent years that the atmosphere may be being warmed at an excessive rate.

The report was presented to Bush by Thompson, Roemer and governors Madeline Kunin, D-Vt., and Terry E. Branstad, R-Iowa.